

(February 11, 2009) Supporting National Nanotechnology Initiative

Floor Statement - H.R. 554

Reauthorizing the National Nanotechnology Initiative, the NNI

Congressman Dan Lipinski

February 11, 2009

I rise in support of H.R. 554, reauthorizing the National Nanotechnology Initiative, the NNI.

I want to commend Chairman Gordon and Ranking Member Hall for their hard work in crafting this important bill and thank all of the Members on both sides of the aisle and the Science and Technology Committee for their hard work last year on quickly doing a great job getting this done, getting it to the floor where we passed it. Now, hopefully this year, as we move quickly--we're off to a quick start thanks to Chairman Gordon. We can finally get this reauthorization done this year.

I really firmly believe that nanotech represents one of the most important--if not the most important--technological keys to improving our Nation's future economic growth and improving our way of life.

Now, a lot of people don't know what nanotech is. I want to really thank Ranking Member Hall for his great and impressive tutorial he gave on what nanotech is. It may be one of the most important things that people could learn from listening to the floor today.

Nanotech is the next industrial revolution. It is so critical that we take the necessary steps in this reauthorization so that our country remains on the cutting edge of this revolution.

Nanotech has the potential to deliver many revolutionary advances, from energy efficient, low-emission ``green" manufacturing systems, to inexpensive portable water purification systems that provide universal access to safe water.

Nanotechnology has the potential to impact every sector of our economy. In just 6 years, the global market for nanoscale materials and products is expected to reach \$2.6 trillion and to be incorporated into 15 percent of the global manufacturing output.

The NNI has been effective in supporting productive, cooperative research efforts across a wide spectrum of disciplines. The Initiative has established a network of state-of-the-art national facilities that are conducting groundbreaking work in nanoscale research and development. These centers of excellence have helped the U.S. lead the world in development and expansion of nanotechnology, leadership that has been vital to economic development and essential to the creation of innovative jobs leading to a stronger and more competitive America.

My home State of Illinois is one of the leaders in nanotech research. Many universities and businesses have become deeply invested through programs like the NNI. For example, my alma mater, Northwestern University, houses the Institute for Nanotechnology, which supports research and facilitates collaboration in solving major problems such as finding more precise ways to deliver chemotherapy, along with other medical applications of nanotech.

The Institute includes the Center for Nanofabrication and Molecular Self-Assembly, a multimillion-dollar research facility and one of the first federally funded centers of its kind. It helps foster partnerships to encourage researchers and entrepreneurs to become involved in this cutting-edge field, creating jobs and potential for entirely new industries.

Now, the reauthorization of the NNI includes three significant adjustments. First, it strengthens the planning and implementation of research on environmental health and safety aspects of nanotech ensuring that possible unintended impacts of nanotech products will not defeat the enormous promise of this technology. We need to make sure that people are confident in nanotech, and we need to make sure we can be confident in the safety of nanotech. That's one of the critical things that this reauthorization does with the NNI.

Second, it requires the NNI to place increased emphasis on technology transfer, which entails moving basic research results out of the lab and into commercial products. From my own experience in Illinois with our national labs and research universities, I know that technology transfer is not simple, but it is an important part of ensuring that R&D investments serve the public. Remember, we, the American people, are making these investments. We need to do everything we can that we have technology transfers, that everything that is found, everything developed, is something that we can bring to market.

And finally, this reauthorization creates new education programs to attract secondary school students to science and technology studies and to help prepare the nanotechnology workforce of tomorrow. As a former educator and as chairman of the Research and Science Education Subcommittee, I understand the vital role of education in promoting the success of individual Americans, and more broadly, the economic competitiveness of our Nation.

The field of nanotechnology holds great promise for our future, and it's critical that we do all that we can to help ensure that America leads the way in nanotech innovation. H.R. 554 will place the U.S. in a key position to drive technology breakthroughs and go even further to ensuring our long-term competitiveness in the global economic marketplace.

I encourage my colleagues to support the passage of H.R. 554, move this authorization forward and get this done this year so we can keep America moving forward on the cutting edge of this new revolution.

